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JOURNAL
Winston-Salem, North Carolina
July 27, 1962

The Cigarette Study Panel

THE announced plan of the U.S. Public Health Service to form an "un-biased expert panel" to study the impact of smoking and other factors is welcome news. The study, which hopefully will be comprehensive, thorough and objective, should go far toward removing the relationship between smoking and health from the realm of controversy, rumor and conjecture based largely upon differing statistical data.

A reassuring note in the announcement of the study program made by Surgeon General Luther L. Terry following a meeting with representatives of government, professional, health and industry organizations this week, was the statement that scientists who have already taken a strong pro or con position on smoking and health will not be chosen for the study. This precautionary step minimizes the danger that the study might be too much influenced by those who had

already committed themselves, and felt under obligation to prove they were right. The matters at stake in this study demand an open-minded approach by scientists wholly dedicated to a search for the facts.

The present wide divergence in so-called expert opinion on the smoking-health question is emphasized not only by the opposed views expressed at intervals by American doctors and the differing conclusions emerging from British studies, but also by the findings reported by Russian Soviet and Hungarian scientists at the International Cancer Congress in Moscow. The Soviet doctors, on the basis of their studies, appear unwilling to accept the contention that cigarette smoking is the major cause of lung cancer.

There is an urgent if not compelling need for the doubts and uncertainties on this score to be cleared up. There is much evidence to indicate that smog, climatic

conditions, the over-all health condition of individuals, and other factors, possibly including viruses, are related to lung cancer. But if smoking is the major cause of lung cancer, the public ought to know it.

This panel may not be able to say with finality whether cigarette smoking is a cause of lung cancer, but the public and the tobacco industry have much to gain from a completely fair and thorough study by experts of all the factors in the development of lung cancer. Once the available facts are laid out on the table, the public and the government will have a basis for deciding what corrective action, if any, should be taken.

JOURNAL
Providence, Rhode Island
July 29, 1962

The Government Plans a Wide Air Pollution Study

The federal government, at last, has been smoked out of its position of aloofness and has been persuaded to take a close look at the harmful effects on health resulting from cigarette smoking. The U.S. Public Health Service proposed the full-scale investigation, and President Kennedy has ordered it to move ahead.

Surgeon General Luther L. Terry takes the sensible position that the 12 experts he will select to do the investigation must be persons who have not taken strong public positions on the matter. He has taken the equally sensible position that the harmful effects from all forms of air pollution should be considered, rather than just the harmful effects from smoking.

Sufficient evidence has been amassed in dozens of earlier studies to prove that cigarette smoking can be harmful. There is a direct correlation between the soaring incidence of lung cancer and

the soaring consumption of cigarettes over the last few decades. Further, there is abundant and persuasive evidence that lung cancer is most prevalent among those who have been the heaviest smokers of cigarettes. Other studies have suggested that the cigarette may also be a guilty party helping to cause other diseases.

But even though the cigarette may be a major factor, it may not be the exclusive factor causing all the ills which are laid at its door. There is evidence, for example, that lung cancer is more prevalent in the cities than in the country, and there is the evidence that respiratory ailments are more com-



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mon and widespread in smog-ridden cities like Los Angeles than they are in cities that are blessed with cleaner air. The exhausts from millions of automobiles, the smoke from incinerators, the pollutants from smoke stacks — all these contribute pollution to the air and probably contribute to the health problem.

It is time that a careful and thorough study under impartial government auspices be made of this problem. Even if it doesn't clear the air in the literal sense, it should clear the air of some of the confusion that has surrounded the matter and perhaps show how this growing problem can be brought under control.